

[By Daniel Barlow, Rutland Herald](#)

U.S. Rep. Peter Welch said Tuesday that if Senate Republicans want to continue blocking legislation in the U.S. Congress, they should be forced to actually filibuster.

Welch, a Vermont Democrat, made the unusual move of addressing the gridlock facing the other chamber, where Republican senators have blocked votes on key pieces of legislation passed by the House chamber where Welch serves.

This includes the House's health care, energy and financial reform bills. In all, there are 290 House bills passed in the current session that have not received up-or-down votes in the Senate.

"The Republicans are following a prescription for failure," Welch said during a telephone interview from his office in Washington, D.C., early Tuesday evening. "The bottom line is that the House has passed key pieces of legislation that still haven't been voted on by the Senate."

Welch, now in his second term in office, signed onto a letter with 32 other House Democrats to Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid, urging him to force Republicans to actually filibuster a bill, instead of simply threatening to filibuster.

The filibuster is a procedural move in Congress that allows for a delay in a vote by continuing debate on that bill. The parliamentary procedure dates back to the days of ancient Rome and was made famous in this country in the 1939 James Stewart film, "Mr. Smith Goes to Washington."

But in recent years in U.S. politics, simply the threat of the filibuster has derailed legislation. The only way to end a filibuster in the Senate is a vote by 60 members, a number that is slightly out of reach for that chamber's Democrats.

"We strongly urge you to end the practice of the 'silent filibuster' and quickly bring the House-passed measures that are ready for consideration to the Senate floor without fear of a filibuster," the letter reads. "As the Senate majority leader, you have the right to call for a vote on any of these critically important pieces of legislation – and we urge you to exercise these rights when appropriate."

Welch said in the interview Tuesday that if Senate Republicans actually did filibuster a bill – extending debate for hours, possibly even overnight – that "the American people would rise up in fury."